July 17, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned, are Assyrian-American organizations which work to address the current challenges faced by Christian Assyrians in the Middle East. We would like to first start by expressing our sincerest appreciation for your Administration’s unprecedented support for religious minorities through various initiatives.

Assyrians are an ancient Christian people with a unique heritage indigenous to parts of modern-day Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. The Assyrian people have experienced immense suffering over the course of the past one hundred years. The population of Assyrians in their homeland has gradually declined due to genocide, religious and ethnic persecution, and politically-motivated violence targeting members of their community.

This vulnerable community presently faces various challenges in the countries that comprise their homeland:

1. In Iran, an Assyrian family—Pastor Victor Bet Tamraz, his wife Shamiran Issavi, and their son Rameil Bet Tamraz—were convicted on unfounded charges for activities related to the practice of their Christian faith. Please urge Iranian authorities to grant the immediate and unconditional release of Pastor Bet Tamraz and his family.

2. In Iraq, Assyrians of the Nineveh Plain are still reeling in the damages in the post-ISIS phase, and their future is threatened due to ongoing instability. Please support the creation of a self-governed province in the Nineveh Plain administered by the Iraqi Central Government in accordance with Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution and support the establishment of a unified security force derived from the local population. Please support measures to end the systematic expropriation of Assyrian lands in the Nineveh Plain and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

3. In Syria, the Assyrian population suffered greatly as a result of the ongoing internal conflict and ISIS terrorism targeting Assyrians, particularly in Hasakah Province. Please support measures to promote stability in Syria and rebuild minority-inhabited areas to promote repatriation.

In the spirit of honoring the innocent Assyrian victims, preserving their presence in their ancestral homelands, and working towards a tolerant society for all peoples of the Middle East, we hope that you will take our views into consideration. Thank you for your leadership and stance on matters related to international religious freedom.

Signed,

Pastor Dabrina Bet Tamraz
Human Rights Activist

Ashur Eskrya, President
Assyrian Aid Society

Juliana Taimoorazy, President
Iraqi Christian Relief Council

Ramand Takhsh, President
Assyrian American Association of Southern California

Reine Hanna, Director
Assyrian Policy Institute